

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 L-03 H-03 EB-11

DRC-01 RSC-01 /042 W

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1355

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC

SUBJECT: ARREST OF US NATIONALS

REF: STATE 198956

1. EMBOFF MET WITH HOFFMAN AND LONDON MANAGER OF ZAPATA, SAMUEL D DENNY, LATE AFTERNOON 6 OCTOBER, AFTER CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTY REACHING HOFFMAN, WHO NOW STAYING IN FEDERAL PALACE HOTEL (TELEPHONE 26691, ROOM 323). ACCORDING TO HOFFMAN, ZAPATA OFF-SHORE EMPLOYEE, FOR REASONS STILL UNCLEAR, HAS TURNED OVER TO NIGERIAN C.ID. BONAFIDE EVIDENCE OF TECHNICAL VISA VIOLATIONS BY COMPANY RELATING TO WORK PERMITS. POLICE HAVE HAD CREWS OF TWO ZAPATA OFF-SHORE RIGS BROUGHT TO WARRI FOR COURT HEARING SCHEDULED FOR 6 OCTOBER. SKELETON CREW OF 2-3 MEN LEFT ON EACH RIG. LAWYER DISPATCHED BY HOFFMAN AND DENNY TO BE PRESENT AT HEARING, BUT NO WORD OF RESULTS, IF ANY, AT TIME OF THIS WRITING.

2. HOFFMAN MAINTAINS THAT COMPANY HAS NOT EXCEEDED TOTAL NUMBER OF EXPATRIATE QUOTAS, BUT CONCEDES THAT NOT ALL MEN ON RIGS HAVE WORK PERMITS IN THEIR OWN NAMES. COMPANY MUST MAINTAIN CERTAIN NUMBER OF MEN ON EACH RIG AND CANNOT WAIT REQUISITE THREE MONTHS FOR APPROVAL OF NEW WORK PERMIT BEFORE REPLACING WORKER WHO QUILTS ON SHORT NOTICE. OF APPROXIMATELY 50 MEN ON TWO RIGS, 8-11 DO NOT

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PRESENTLY HAVE WORK PERMITS, THOUGH THEY ARE WITHIN

AUTHORIZED EXPAT PERMIT AUTHORIZATION AND PAPERS ARE IN MILL FOR APPROVAL.

3. ZAPATA MAINLY CONCERNED TO GET RIGS REMANNED, AS COMPANY LOSING MONEY EACH DAY THEY SHUT DOWN. THEY DO NOT DENY TECHNICAL VIOLATION OF VISA/WORK PERMIT REGULATIONS, BUT HOPE AVOID DEPORTATION OF INDIVIDUAL VIOLATORS. ALTHOUGH C.I.D. PROMISED RETURN OF PASSPORTS OCTOBER 5 TO THOSE EMPLOYEES NOT IN VIOLATION OF VISAS, PASSPORTS NOT RETURNED YET, NOR MEN ALLOWED RETURN TO RIGS.

4. NO QUESTION OF "SERIOUS INTIMIDATION," THOUGH APPEARS NIGERIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE BEEN GOING THROOUGH COMPANY FILES, FINGERPRINTING STAFF, ETC., MORE THAN NORMAL IN SUCH CASES. THIS IS LIKELY RESULT OF FACT THAT C.I.D. HANDLING CASE RATHER THAN IMMIGRATION AUTNORITIES. HOFFMAN AND DENNY BELIEVE EXPLANATION FOR THIS DEVIATION FROM NORMAL PROCEDURE IS THAT ZAPATA EMPLOYEE HAS STRONG CONNECTIONS IN C.I.D. HOFFMAN DID NOT HAVE NAMES OF SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS WHO TO BE "TRIED" FOR VISA VIOLATIONS.

5. IN ADDITION TO COMPLAINT OF VISA VIOLATIONS, SOME MENTION MADE OF POSSIBLE DELINQUENT BACK-TAXES AND OF SLURS ON NIGERIA IN COMPANY CORRESPONDENCE. AT THIS POINT NO FORMAL CHARGES HAVE BEEN LODGED AGAINST COMPANY. LAWYER FRED EGBE IN NIGERIA, REPRESENTING ZAPATA; HE HAS DISCUSSED WITH INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE, ALHAJI KAM SALEM, AND WITH CHIEF OF SPECIAL BRANCH, M.D. YUSUFU. YUSUFU SAID CASE HAS GONE TOO FAR FOR INFORMAL OUT-OF-COURT SETTLEMENT.

6. HOFFMAN AND DENNY SIAD THEY WOULD WELCOME DISCREET PRESSURE BY EMBASSY, IF IT COULD BE EFFECTIVE. HOWEVER, REQUEST WAS VERY LOW-KEY, WITH FULL RECOGNITION THAT SUCH INTERVENTION BY EMBASSY COULD BE DETRIMENTAL RATHER THAN BENEFICIAL. BOTH ACCEPTED WITHOUT RESENTMENT STATEMENT BY EMBOFF THAT IT WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE AS WELL AS RISKY FOR EMBASSY TO TRY TO BRING ANY PRESSURE TO BEAR. EMBOFF SAID THAT, AT MOST, EMBASSY MIGHT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REQUEST TO BE ADVISED OF STATUS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CASE. HOFFMAN GIVEN NAME OF EMBASSY CONSUL DAWSON WITH ADVICE THAT EMBASSY HELP COULD BE GIVEN ONLY IF NIGERIANS CLEARLY ACTING ILLEGALLY. REINHARDT

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